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ABSTRACT

In this document, the first of a projected series of reports on ensuring student success, student equity, and rigorous instructional standards, an overview is provided of the steps taken by Glendale Community College (GCC) to refine and improve student placement in the English curriculum. Following introductory material outlining factors precipitating the college's review of its placement procedures, the report provides background on the GCC's use of the Comparative Guidance and Placement (CGP) test and the College Entrance Examination Board test to assess students' English skills. It also discusses changes in academic standards and students' skill levels and the complications inherent in refining the existing placement system. The next section reviews the statistical procedures used to evaluate and create placement criteria. Several personal and academic characteristics were studied to determine those most highly correlated with success in English 101, including importance to self and others, years out of school, last English and math class, grade in high school math and English, gender, expected hours of employment, primary language, ethnicity, high school grade point average, years of English, age, orientation/guidance course, and CGP reading and sentence scores. The report also describes a second evaluation of the placement system involving a comparison of placement results with the holistic writing scores available on a sub-section of entering students. The final section reviews plans for ongoing evaluation of spring and fall 1989 students and the development of a report on student characteristics for the use of counselors. (JMC)

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# PATHS TO SUCCESS:

## VOLUME ONE: STEPS TOWARDS REFINING STANDARDS AND PLACEMENT IN THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

BY

Scot L. Spicer

October, 1989

JC 890 531

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## SUMMARY

This is the first in what is expected to be a long series of reports on insuring student success, student equity, and rigorous instructional standards. The purpose of such reports is to document the efforts undertaken and studies conducted at Glendale Community College in fulfillment of the regulations on assessment and matriculation as part of the accountability responsibilities within the California community colleges. Such reports also provide an institutional history for on-going efforts independent of the presence of specific individuals.

This first volume reviews the steps taken in response to specific instructional goals to refine and improve student placement in the English curriculum. The report traces the history of assessment and placement criteria for English 120 and 101 (freshman composition) at the college including the adoption of new placement criteria implemented in spring of 1989.

Steps taken and planned towards an equitable placement procedure with high academic standards are set forth. These steps involve both instructional and counseling faculty; the Learning, Tutorial, and Assessment Center; and the Planning and Research unit. Follow-up evaluation and expansion of the project to include the ESL course sequence leading to English 101 are outlined.

Some may find sections of this volume to be more technical than their interests; it is expected that the statistical methodology used in justifying placement criteria will not be of interest to all. However, this methodology is provided to allow technical feedback on this aspect of required evaluation. To facilitate the review of this document by the broadest possible audience, summary statements are provided for major sections of the report so that individuals can review those issues of most concern to them.

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## INTRODUCTION

Glendale Community College seeks to place students into the English course(s) or course sequence which will build upon prior English language training, assist them in their educational goals, and prepare them for subsequent collegiate coursework at the college. In order to meet these goals, the college has an assessment program which administers reading and writing assessments to incoming students using the standardized forms known as "Comparative Guidance and Placement" (CGP) developed by the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) of Princeton, New Jersey. The CGP reading and sentence tests are the most frequently used language assessment instruments within the California Community Colleges. [1]

Concern about the preparation of students to benefit from the freshman composition course by the English Department faculty; feedback from four-year institutions; frustration by the Social Sciences faculty at the reading, oral expression, and writing ability of students attempting their courses; and a general concern for effective and equitable assessment, placement, and instruction for students at the state level led the college to undertake a comprehensive review of the English placement procedures beginning in the fall of 1987.

There are several other English language assessment instruments used by the college, but this study will consider only the two CGP tests because they constituted the exclusive placement instruments at the initiation of the study for recommending students into freshman composition (English 101) and two lower level courses. Use of other instruments is under consideration, and the college uses a locally developed instrument for the assessment of the language skills of ESL students. In the fall of 1987 in addition to the CGP battery, some students wrote an essay to be used as a possible alternative within the placement procedure by the Learning, Tutorial, and Assessment Center. The results from these holistically evaluated essays will be discussed later in this document.

## GCC PLACEMENT PROCEDURES

Summary: This section reviews the history of English placement based on the CGP tests at the college and establishes the background and complications inherent in refining the existing placement system.

The college introduced the CGP instruments in 1959 when CEEB announced that it would discontinue the American Council on Education (ACE) assessment instrument. The college was using the ACE with the Cooperative Education English assessment for placement at the time. The college used both batteries during the 1959-60 academic year to establish comparable scores between the old and the new instruments. CEEB did annual validation studies on the CGP tests through 1981-82, with another study conducted on fall 1984 students. It seems apparent that the cut-off score for the campus' freshman composition course was based on the college norms recorded in 1974. The cut-off was set at the campus median for the "freshman" population which was higher than the national median. The cut-off scores used were based on the scaled "percentile" score rather than the raw scores. In the early 1970's, the majority of the college's freshmen were from three local high schools with highly similar socio-economic characteristics. As reporting from the Planning and Research unit has discussed, the demographics of the college have changed significantly since then to include a much more diverse population. Apparently, between 1974 and 1984 as the campus median declined towards the instrument's established national median, the percentile score requirements were raised "a couple of times by a point or two" based on faculty feedback to the assessment coordinator. However, as it was only the campus percentile cut-off score that was adjusted upward, the actual raw score cut-off stayed the same. [2]

The 1984 study conducted by the College Entrance Examination Board was the last available follow-up study done on the Glendale Community College placement. A total of three hundred students were in this study. For the criterion "English Grades" in the 101 and 120 courses, CEEB found two variables to be predictive. Table 1 includes

the summary of their findings. [3]

**Table 1: CEEB 1984 Study Results**

| | MEAN | STANDARD DEVIATION | CORRELATION WITH CRITERION |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Section A: English 101** (N=198) | | | |
| **CRITERION: English 101 Grade** | 2.38 | 1.03 | |
| **CGP Reading** | 51.86 | 8.23 | .060 |
| **CGP Sentence** | 53.81 | 7.34 | .086 |
| **Section B: English 120** (N=102) | | | |
| **CRITERION: English 120 Grade** | 2.00 | 1.05 | |
| **CGP Reading** | 39.31 | 7.12 | .153 |
| **CGP Sentence** | 43.59 | 6.82 | .281 |

In comparing CGP reading and sentence percentile scores, CEEB reported that the better predictor of grades in English 101 and 120 was the sentence percentile score with a multiple correlation of .086 and .281, respectively. However, high school grade point average had a much higher correlation, .384, than either of the assessment tests. (For CEEB's study, the student high school grades were collected by the assessment center after the semester began and forwarded to CEEB with the testing data.) Because high school grades had the highest correlation of all the predictor variables in the CEEB study, it was somewhat surprising that there had not been more effort to use them in placement recommendations.

On the basis of this follow-up study the college continued to have the official policy of placing students in English composition on the basis of their CGP reading or sentence scores and high school English grades. However, it should be noted that the college did not require high school transcripts, nor did the college have a policy of recording high school grades for the purpose of placement. It therefore seems probable that the high school grade requirement received minimal attention.

In the fall of 1987, the minimum scores required for placement into the three English courses considered as part of this study were the following:

**Table 2: Fall 1987 GCC English Placement Criteria**

| | CGP Reading | | CGP Sentence | | High School English Grade |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English 101 (Freshman Comp) | ≥22 | or | ≥25 | and | "B" |
| English 120 (1 level below FC) | ≥18 | or | ≥15 | and | "C" |
| English 191 (2 levels below FC) | ≤18 | and | ≤15 | | |

In the fall of 1987, the CGP instruments were administered to 2,024 students for the purpose of placement in English courses. On the basis of the 1987 placement procedure, 1,257 (62%) of the students were placed in English 101 (freshman composition), 558 (28%) were placed in English 120, and 209 students (10%) were placed in 191. In comparison, none of the public four-year institutions in our area places more than 50% of its entering students into freshman composition.

## Changing Standards and Underprepared Students

The Language Arts Division initiated a review of academic standards during the 1987-88 academic year based primarily on feedback about student preparation from four-year institutions. The Language Arts Division voted in the spring of 1988 to approve the recommendation of the English faculty to increase the number and length of required essays in the English 101 and 120 courses, to be effective in fall of 1988. In reaction to the already high dissatisfaction with the placement procedure, the English faculty also recommended that the placement procedure should be made more rigorous, suggesting that rather than raise the minimum scores required for placement in English 101 and 120, both the reading and the sentence cut-off scores be required for placement.

Before this combined score procedure was implemented, the Planning and Research unit was asked to determine if the proposed procedure or yet another might be more predictive of student success than the individual CGP tests used alone. It was determined by using the student assessment records for those entering in fall of 1987 that the combination placement procedure would have reduced the number of students placed in English 101 from 1,257 (62%) to 758 (37%), increased the number placed in English 120 from 558 (28%) to 728 (36%), and increased those placed in English 191 from 209 (10%) to 538 (27%). Among this group of assessed students, 372 enrolled in English 101 and 217 enrolled in English 120 during the fall of 1987. As Table 3 on the next page indicates, while the combination procedure changed placements, it would not have increased the success of enrolled students (as evidenced by grades of A, B, or C). In fact, the combined score procedure would have produced placements with a slightly lower probability of success than placements based solely on the CGP sentence score.

After it was determined that the combined score placement procedure did not improve the prediction of student success, the Planning and Research unit undertook

a project to utilize new information to develop a more appropriate placement recommendation. In a desire to improve the assessment process for students, the college's Learning, Tutorial, and Assessment Center contracted to use the Computerized Assessment and Placement Programs (CAPP) intake forms

**Table 3: Student Success in Fall 1987 English Courses**
(Based on assessment results and course enrollment)

---

**Section A: Student Success in English 101**
(N=372, actual enrollment)

| | %Earning A, B or C | |
|---|---|---|
| Who could have enrolled based on the CGP sentence score only: | 63.9% | (n=305) |
| Who could have enrolled based on the CGP reading score only: | 59.7% | (n=357) |
| Who could have enrolled based on the combined scores: | 62.6% | (n=278) |

**Section B: Student Success in English 120**
(N=217, actual enrollment)

| | %Earning A, B or C | |
|---|---|---|
| Who could have enrolled based on the CGP sentence score only: | 57.2% | (n=152) |
| Who could have enrolled based on the CGP reading score only: | 52.4% | (n=170) |
| Who could have enrolled based on combined scores: | 55.4% | (n= 92) |

---

and software support beginning in the fall 1986 semester. The new system added information to the student's assessment file based on the student's response to a number of questions and provided an automatically generated and recorded placement recommendation for the first time. The importance of this additional information is twofold. Firstly, its value is demonstrated by regression analysis on available variables to predict student success. Secondly, it is necessary to have this separate information as at the time of assessment many students will not have had their application information entered into the college's data base, and thus there is little information available for advisement and placement recommendations.

## The Complications

Since no true experimental design is possible, reasonable statistical and professional evaluation has to guide the refinement of placement recommendations. Establishing an initial placement procedure is considerably simpler than refining an existing one in a setting where student choice is already constrained. Further complicating the situation was the fact that not only was a placement procedure in place, but a automated placement recommendation process had just been introduced by the Learning, Tutorial, and Assessment Center. Staff were just beginning to adapt the new information and process into their perspective and dealings with students, and thus there was some initial frustration with the prospect of further changes in the system.

Glendale had long had a placement procedure with relatively constant criteria, but a declining student success rate had led to concern. In addition to an observed decline in the level of student course success, the rigor of the grading in the courses was also at issue. Students proceeding through the curriculum sequence were less likely to successfully complete the freshman composition class than students placed directly into the class. Student ability as measured by completing English courses no longer meant they were prepared for the next level course or other "collegiate" curriculum at the college. [Similar findings reflecting student instructional gains as being insufficient to match the entry skills expected in the next level course were noted in the LARC (Learning Assessment Retention Consortium) Student Outcome Studies covering both language and mathematics curriculum.]

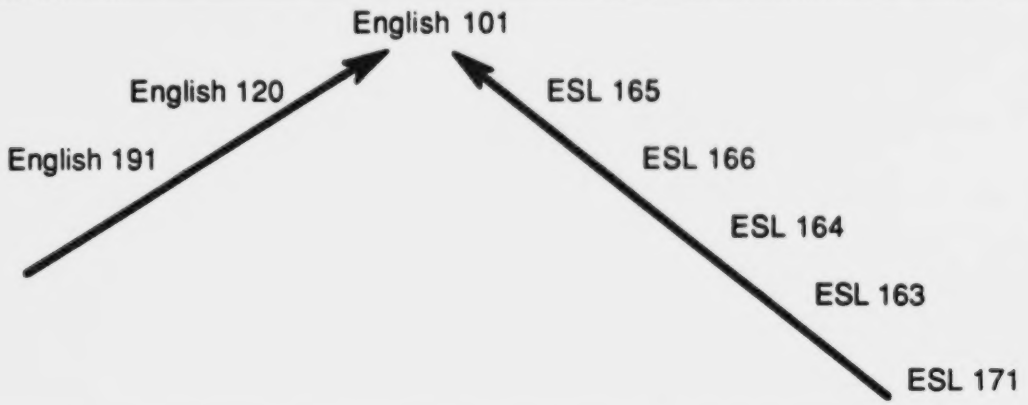
One concern regarding standards was focused on the fact that the majority of English 120 sections were taught by part-time faculty. Part-time faculty are not compensated to participate in division or faculty meetings and activities, and consequently communication of standards and peer contact is lacking for the most part.

In approaching the refinement of the placement procedure, it had to therefore be recognized that the courses were being made more difficult and challenging as the placement procedure was being refined. It therefore became a goal for the refinement of the placement system to make the student cohort at each level more narrow in variation of ability so that instruction could be more focused.

As the placement review began, a flaw in the current procedure was immediately noted. Students taking the CGP assessment tests and failing to achieve a cut-off score for English 101 and 120 were "automatically" referred into English 191. English 191 is essentially a junior high level skills course with effective paragraph writing its goal (although at least one faculty member has suggested that it is being taught below the junior high school level). Over the past decade faculty teaching the English 191 course have noted an increasing number of non-native speakers who have considerable difficulty with the material.

The English 191 placement procedure put the instructional and counseling faculty at odds, with the instructional faculty wondering why "ESL students" were in English 191. English 191 is one level below the A.A. requirement at the college and two levels below the freshman composition course in the curriculum. However, among those students who took the ESL placement test for fall of 1987, 60% were recommended for ESL 164 or lower, whereas they could take English 191 instead. As the curriculum sequence outlined in Table 4 illustrates, it is easy to see that entering English 191 could be a "faster" way through the graduation and transfer requirements than enrolling in the ESL sequence.

**Table 4: English Course Sequence**
Fall 1987 Native and Non-Native Speakers Curriculum




The first recommendation of the current study was that students failing to make the minimum English 120 cut-off score on the CGP assessment be referred to take either the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE) from the Psychological Corporation or the college's ESL placement instrument for placement into either native speaker developmental curriculum or the ESL curriculum. Both of these instruments are more appropriate assessments of language skills at the level of the courses under consideration. This recommendation was accepted by the faculty for spring 1989 implementation. The faculty also initiated the design of a developmental course below the English 191 level for native speakers.

Finally, the placement review project set student course success as its ultimate placement criteria, desiring that there be a 70% probability of success in the automatically determined placement recommendation. Additionally, 25% or less of the students who ignored the recommended placement level and took a course without counseling concurrence should be able to succeed for the cut-off scores to have an acceptable level of "false negatives" for the placement cut-offs. Whether these standards can actually be achieved is still a matter of speculation. At this initial phase of review, the goal must be to use the existing information to identify clustered cohorts for placement.

## METHODOLOGY

Summary: This section reviews the statistical procedures used to evaluate and create student characteristic variables for placement recommendations. The definition and selection of outcome criteria and the evaluation of new placement criteria are discussed.

Student records from three different sources were merged into a special placement file for the purpose of this study. This information included:

I. From the Student Master Record, maintained by Data Processing from application information entered by Admissions and Records staff: name, student ID, age, sex, high school, major, ethnicity, and part- or full-time student status.

II. From Assessment Records maintained on a PC in that unit and down-loaded by Data Processing staff: test scores for CGP reading, sentence, mathematics, and personal information not supplied in the SMR, such as years of English study, grade in last high school English course, high school grade point average, highest level math class, last grade in high school math, whether college was important to others and self, and primary language.

III. From the Course Records File maintained by Data Processing: grades for summer, fall, and spring semester courses at the college.

In the follow-up studies conducted by CEEB and in the current study, the statistical methodology used was multiple regression analysis. The definitions for the statistical procedures are:

MULTIPLE REGRESSION OR CORRELATION: "A statistical procedure for indicating the degree of relationship between one dependent variable and two

or more independent variables."[4]

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: "A measured variable that is the consequence of or is dependent upon antecedent or experimental variable(s); also referred to as the effect, the outcome, or the post-test."[5]

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE: "A variable antecedent to or preceding the dependent variable; also called, in experimental design and quasi-experimental design, the experimental variable, the cause, or the treatment."[6]

For the purpose of this study the dependent or outcome variable is success in English 101. However, many variations of the definition of "student success" were examined because of the environment of this project. In the final analyses, two definitions of student success were used to examine the value of independent variables in predicting English course success. These were:

"NEW101:" This coded A to F grades with their numeric value and excluded W grades (Note: W's constitute approximately 25 percent of English grades);

"HIGH2:" This coded A and B grades as "1," with C, D, and F grades coded as "0," and it excluded W grades.

The latter approach was reviewed because of concern that there has been general grade inflation during the 1980's and some internal hard evidence from other academic areas that the value of a "C" grade in representing a student's ability was significantly less than the "A" and "B" grades. The regression equation and correlation for both criteria will be presented as a matter of interest.

The independent variables for this study were all those available to the college

that precede the outcome variable, including demographic variables, test scores, and other personal information collected in the college's database.

Just as the CEEB study attempted to determine "...a unique, optimal combination of several predictors which maximizes the accuracy of predicting the criterion," the goal of this study was to use whatever available information would predict a student's likelihood of success in the English curriculum. [7]

Because multiple regression analysis sifts out variables which are not correlated with the selected outcome measure, in this case success in English 101, the study used all available information on initial runs which also produced a table of Pearson coefficients for all variables. After initial correlation patterns were detected, the independent variables were limited to the following to see which would be the most highly correlated with English success:

Importance to Self
Years out of School
Last English Class
Grade in HS Math
Gender
Expected Hours of Employment
Primary Language
Ethnicity
High School GPA
Importance to Others
Grade in HS English
Years of English
Last Math Class
Age
Orientation/Guidance course (summer)
CGP Reading Score
CGP Sentence Score

Care was taken to insure that all variables were coded correctly, and that descriptive variables, like gender, ethnicity, orientation, and primary language, were recoded into dummy variables. It is clear that such variables may act as a proxy for socialization and other socio-economic factors, and as such were of interest to the researchers. However, some of these characteristics are inappropriate and (in some cases) illegal for use as placement criteria.

The final outcome (or dependent variable in this equation) was student success in the English 101 course. The stepwise method of multiple regression analysis was used because it clusters variables which are related so that the variable with the highest correlation enters the equation first. If the variable did not have a high correlation or was not considered statistically significant ($p < .05$), the variable did not enter the equation. The highest Multiple R produced in the various data runs in this second phase of the review is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Regression for Maximum Multiple R**
All Variables -- English 101 For Fall 1987 Semester

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DEPENDENT VARIABLE: NEW101 (numeric grade values, no W's)

Entering the equation: High School GPA, Age, Male, Importance to self, CGP Sentence score.

Multiple R: .44399 Significance: F=.0000 Standard Error: .99125

---

Unfortunately, not only does this equation have inappropriate criteria for an automated placement (age and gender), but upon further review it was discovered that the data base had information gaps. Specifically, to the question, "How important is college to you personally?", the data base indicated that "very important" was marked by 3.5% of the students, but that 95% gave no answer. While it was not possible to determine whether the data were truly missing or whether they had not been moved into the new data base, the proctors for the assessment tests are now insuring greater survey response compliance. This information is likely to have value for counseling of students.

The response rate on GPA was the reverse of the self-importance question, with only 3.9% reporting no information on this question. A total of 78% of the students reported being in two different categories between a 2.5 and 3.4 high school GPA.

Age, years out of school, and not being male did enter various regression equations, supporting the perceptions of the college's counselors that older, returning students and women in particular are more likely to exceed the predicted level of abilities indicated by their assessment scores. However, none of these characteristics is deemed appropriate for an automated placement formula. An effort will be made to turn this information into *Student Profiles* for use by counselors to assist in identifying "at risk" and "exceptional" students to make appropriate placement system overrides. Finally, high school math grades were evident as a significant predictor of success in English as we looked at the student who did not take an English course during their first semester of enrollment. Specifically in predicting a spring semester English grade for fall entrants, this information frequently appeared in regression equations explored.

The frequency distribution of the CGP sentence scores is much closer to a normal curve than the CGP reading scores. The reading and sentence CGP scores had a strong interrelationship with a Pearson Correlation of .7064 on the sample of 2,024 fall 1987 entrants assessed, so they should be considered as similar in their assessment of a student's English language skills. Because of the strength of the sentence score variable, it would always enter a regression analysis ahead of the reading score. Furthermore, because of the high intercorrelation between these two items, the reading score did not contribute enough additional information to enter any of the stepwise regression equations.

High school GPA was the most frequent item to enter first into the unlimited regressions attempted. Regardless of its predictive value, there was considerable concern by many on the campus that the self-report GPA was not a "safe" variable to use for placement purposes as it could be easily manipulated. Nonetheless, a review

of other placement evaluation efforts convinced the campus to move forward with the use of self-reported GPA due to its clear value and its likelihood of accuracy. It was suggested that the counseling staff could verify the student's reported grades at the counseling session for course selection because of the likelihood that in person, the student would be more likely to answer the question honestly.

After the first and second regression series were completed and the viability and appropriateness of the data reviewed, it was hypothesized that a new variable consisting of the two CGP tests and high school GPA could be constructed to give a strong predictive placement recommendation. To determine what composition of these three variables was the greatest predictor, a series of equations was created using the CGP and GPA data in a variety of formats, sometimes weighted, sometimes additive. Using both the NEW101 and HIGH2 dependent variables, there was only a marginal variation in the Multiple R's achieved. It was determined that the simplest equation, which collapsed all three scores into seven point scales, fell within the middle of the Multiple R ranges derived from all such equations attempted. Its most notable advantage was the ease with which individuals could calculate the placement recommendation based on a student's score on a 21 point range. Additionally, the distribution of students produced by the variable called "CGPGPA1" approached a normal distribution (see Table 6 on next page) with a mean, median, and mode of 14.

**The CGPGPA1 Variable**

In its original format the CGP sentence score had a 40 point range, the reading scale had a 35 point range, and high school grade point average a seven point scale from the CAPP intake form, 1 = (0-0.9), 2 = (1.0-1.4), 3 = (1.5-1.9), 4 = (2.0-2.4), 5 = (2.5-2.9), 6 = (3.0-3.4), and 7 = (3.5-4.0). CGPGPA1, the selected equation, consisted of a 21 point composite scale, with high school GPA retaining its original 7 categories and the two test scores scaled into 7 equally spread categories. (The reading instrument scores collapsed evenly into a 7 point scale, while the sentence instrument

scores were collapsed into even categories except for "short" categories at the top and bottom.) Returning to the regression format, the same basic variables (see page ?), with the calculated CGPGPA1 replacing both assessment scores and high school GPA, was run. Table 7 on the next page illustrates the key findings.

**Table 6: Distribution of CGPGPA1 Composite Scores**

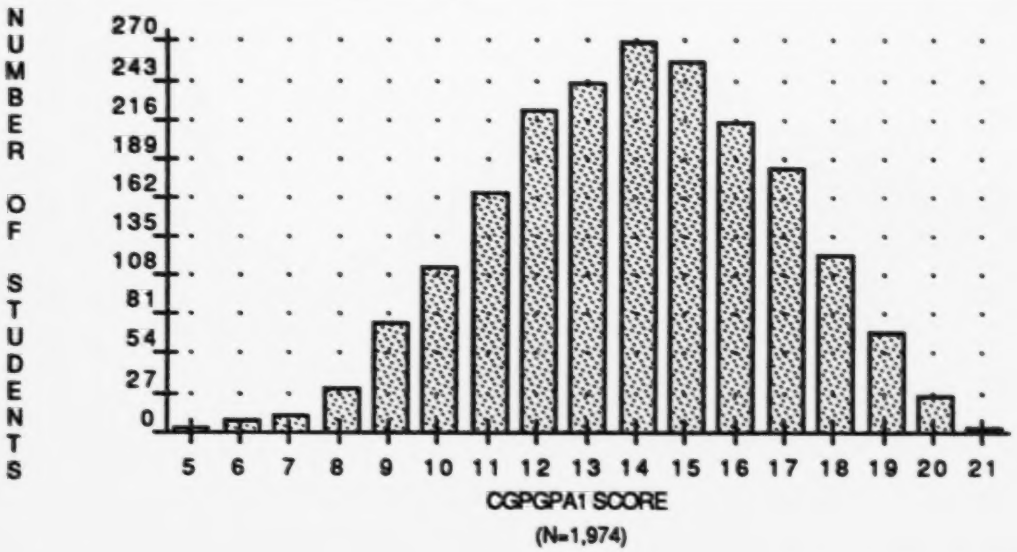

**Table 7: CGPGPA1 Regressions**

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DEPENDENT VARIABLE: NEW101 (numeric grade values, no W's)
Entering the equation: CGPGPA1, Age, Importance to self, Male.
Multiple R: .44433 Significance: F=.0000 Standard Error: 1.01248

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: HIGH2 (As and Bs equal "1," Cs, Ds, and Fs equal "0," with Ws excluded)
Entering the equation: CGPGPA1, Age, Male.
Multiple R: .43213 Significance: F=.0000 Standard Error: .45257

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It was evident that the new variable, CGPGPA1, could not only approach the best equation which was obtained in the open regression format with all available data, but could actually increase (very slightly) the Multiple R for the predictive equation (see Appendix A). Furthermore, the new variable not only entered the equation first, it also had the highest first element Multiple R, reaching .31137 for the NEW101 dependent variable, of any regression equation generated (Standard Error = 1.06225, Significance F=.0002). As the value of the variable was within an acceptable decision range, use of the CGPGPA1 score as the placement criteria was recommended, and establishing cut-off scores for the mechanical placement followed.

The ultimate goal of cut-off scores was to establish a 70% positive success rate. However, one has to remember that the difficulty of the courses was being increased and standards strengthened concurrent with this reexamination of placement entry mode. Consequently, cut-off scores at this point would attempt to cluster students with a high probably of success in the changing environment based on level of success in the current curriculum.

All fall 1987 English 120 and 101 course enrollees were examined to calculate

their CGPGPA1 scores and assess their course success as a function of these scores. Students with scores of 11 and below had less than a 50% rate of success in either English 101 or 120. While 57% of the students who scored 15 on the new 21 point scale and enrolled in English 101 in fall of 1987 did succeed, half of them did so with only a "C" grade. Moreover, looking at the demographics of successful students who had lower placement scores, older students were found to be disproportionately represented. Of the students at 16 or above on the scale who took English 101, 72% obtained a successful grade with only a quarter of those being "C" grades. Given all these considerations, the faculty voted to accept the placement criteria of 12 for English 120 and 16 for English 101 on the new CGPGPA1 criteria score, and to experiment with end-of-term holistically evaluated essays (advisory for grading) as an effort to communicate and verify standards, both of which were implemented in the spring of 1989.

**Faculty Evaluation of Placements**

A second evaluation of the mechanical placement recommendation was undertaken with a comparison of the old and new procedures to the holistic scores available on a sub-section of the entering students.

The Learning, Tutorial, and Assessment Center organized a holistically scored essay component of assessment in the fall of 1987 as an effort to develop an option for better placement of students. The English faculty as a whole did not feel an assessment essay upon entry to the college would be a reasonable undertaking for placement because of the difficulty in reading 3,500 or more essays in the short period of time allocated for fall placement. Nonetheless, sufficient faculty agreed to participate in the late summer of 1987 so that 139 of the essays received at least two faculty evaluations and were forwarded to the Planning and Research unit. Table 8 compares the placement received by the students under the fall 1987 procedure for English 101, 120, and 191 with their CGPGPA1 and holistic placement. Holistic

evaluation was based on "being ready" for a particular level of instruction. As the table shows, the CGPGPA1 procedure had a greater congruence with the faculty's holistic evaluation than the old procedure. (It should be recalled that the old placement procedure "recommended" everyone scoring below the English 120 cut-off score into English 191, whereas the CGPGPA1 procedure referred such students for further assessment with either a basic reading ability instrument or the ESL instrument. In the holisitc evaluation faculty could indicate whether the essay should be recommended for English 191 or an ESL assessment.)

**Table 8: Fall 1987 Placement vs Holistic Evaluation vs CGPGPA1 Placement**

**Section A:**
**Among those placed in English 101 by the fall 1987 procedure.**
(N=78)

| | Faculty Holistic Placement | 101 | 120 | 191 | ESL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CGPGPA1 Placement | 101 | 23 | 15 | 2 | 0 |
| | 120 | 9 | 19 | 5 | 3 |
| | Lower | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

Holistic and Fall 1987 Placement Agreement 32/78 = 41.0%
Holistic and CGPGPA1 Placement Agreement 42/78 = 53.8%

**Section B:**
**Among those placed in English 120 by the fall 1987 procedure.**
(N=34)

| | | Faculty Holistic Placement | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 101 | 120 | 191 | ESL |
| CGPGPA1 Placement | 101 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| | 120 | 4 | 17 | 7 | 1 |
| | Lower | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |

Holistic and Fall 1987 Placement Agreement 19/34 = 55.9%
Holistic and CGPGPA1 Placement Agreement 20/34 = 58.8%

**Section C:**
**Among those placed in English 191 by the fall 1987 procedure**
(N=27)

| | | Faculty Holistic Placement | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 101 | 120 | 191 | ESL |
| CGPGPA1 Placement | 101 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 120 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| | Lower | 0 | 5 | 7 | 9* |

Holistic and Fall 1987 Placement Agreement 9/27 = 33.3%
Holistic and CGPGPA1 Placement Agreement 20/27 = 66.7%

*All recent immigrants

**Overall Congruence:**

Holistic and Fall 1987 Placement Agreement: 60/139 = **43.2%**

Holistic and CGPGPA1 Placement Agreement: 82/139 = **59.0%**

**Section D:**
**Overall Comparison of Placement Recommendations**
(N=139)

| | Fall 1987 | Holistic | CGPGPA1 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 101 | 78 | 36 | 43 |
| | 56% | 26% | 31% |
| 120 | 34 | 64 | 70 |
| | 24% | 46% | 50% |
| lower | 27 | 39 | 26 |
| | 19% | 28% | 21% |

## FOLLOW-UP

Summary: The plans for on-going evaluation of spring 1989 and fall 1989 students are outlined. The development of *Student Profiles* for counseling use and the initial matching of grades and holistic evaluation are reviewed.

Glendale Community College is fortunate to have two initiatives assisting in the assessment and placement areas as the 1989-90 year begins which are aimed at insuring student success, student equity, and rigorous instructional standards. Matriculation funds assisted in the spring 1989 holistic evaluation project and provided evaluation staff in the Planning and Research unit. In addition, each of the three components of the federal Title III grant will directly impact the ability of the college to serve students and conduct evaluation. The College Access Program is designed to provide assistance to faculty in tailoring instruction for the transitional needs of students and to support the experimentation with additional assessment procedures including computerized adaptive testing. The Instructional Assistance Program will afford the opportunity to develop tutorial and other support structures for students to be tied directly to the specific curriculum and to evaluate opportunities to use more technology in instructional activities. And finally, the Management Information System Project will make student tracking and evaluation projects more feasible.

A number of specific follow-up steps have or will be taken in the on-going evaluation of placement into English 120 and 101. As the full opportunities of the Title III grant unfold, added dimensions of assessment and curriculum relationships will be studied and evaluated. The ESL course sequence will also undergo evaluation of student progress and success.

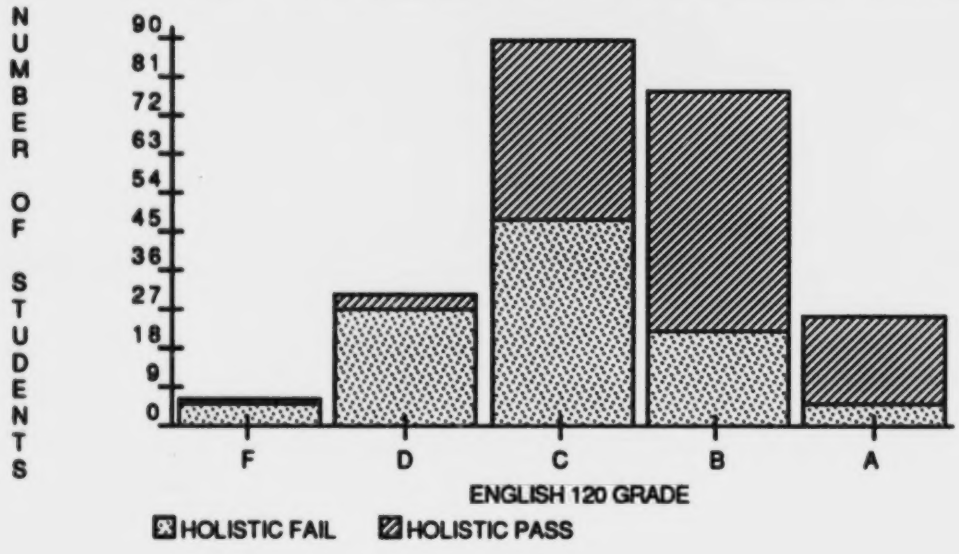
### Spring 1989 English 120 Students

The first post-CGPGPA1 evaluation of the placement system began in the spring of 1989 with the holistic evaluation of English 120 end-of-term essays. Classes

with about one-fifth of the total enrollment participated in the project. Part-time instructors who wished to participate were compensated from the college's matriculation funding. An outside expert in the organization of holistic scoring sessions was similarly hired with matriculation funds to guide the faculty through the undertaking. This individual conducted the norming session and supervised the actual scoring session. The students represented in this pool of essays thus have two faculty evaluations of their writing and a course grade as indicative of their skills preparation.

The students in the spring 1989 English 120 courses were not necessarily placed by the CGPGPA1 procedure as placement results are valid for two years at the college. However, 94.6% of the students who would have been placed in the course through the CGPGPA1 procedure and whose instructors participated in the end-of-term holistic evaluation exercise received a grade of A, B or C, and 68.5% passed the holistic evaluation for English 101 readiness. As the graph in Table 9 suggests, there was a considerable difference between the holistic pass evaluations and the awarding of the "C" grade. However, both outcome measures have been included in a follow-up data base to evaluate which of the skills measures become more predictive of the student's ability in English 101 and other curriculum. Following the report on these outcomes, the faculty voted to continue the holistic effort for four semesters and to initiate outreach to part-timers to insure all faculty are involved in the evolution and development of comparable standards within the curriculum.

**Table 9: Holistic Evaluation and Spring 1989 English 120 Grades**
**(N=227)**




In addition to reviewing the spring 1989 completers of English 120 for success in 101 and other college curriculum, a parallel effort will be undertaken with students proceeding from ESL 165 (the ESL course equivalent to English 120) to English 101 and other college curriculum. Again, both a course grade and a holistic evaluation is available for 405 students completing one of the five levels of ESL instruction during spring 1989 including 78 in ESL 165. The ESL faculty have had end-of-term holistic evaluations in place for three years.

**Fall 1989 New Students**

The fall of 1989 will be the first opportunity for a comprehensive evaluation of the new placement system on a large cross-section of new students, an effort to be undertaken by the Planning and Research unit for the English Department and the campus Assessment Committee. Included will be a review of pre-census course

changes to see what the movement of students has been after instruction began, the development of a data base and an agenda for follow-up studies on fall 1989 entering students, and an evaluation of the impact of instruction on student equity.

The English and ESL faculties met in October of 1989 to review the standards for the evaluation of student skills as established with the holistic evaluation session. Twenty-five faculty members participated in a norm-setting session using the same essays which had been used for the English 120 holistic project of the prior spring. Since ESL 165 and English 120 are intended to be equivalent, this first step at bringing the standards and expectations of the two faculty groups together was conducted to insure all knew the expectations for the semester and how the holisitc end-of-term essays would be evaluated. Eventually it is planned that the ESL 165 and English 120 end-of-term essays will be scored within a single pool. The midterm norming session demonstrated concurrence among the faculty both on standards and the norms used in the prior spring project. Students will be advised of the standards as well through the distribution of the normed essays to them as examples. [8]

**Student Profiles**

While the campus assessment and placement system is expected to make appropriate recommendations for most students into most sections of the curriculum, the developing of *Student Profiles* offers an exciting effort to better serve our students. Special populations and students with unusual circumstances are common to the community college, and understanding their needs and course behaviors will allow the institution to better illuminate their path. The effort to develop the *Student Profiles* of "at risk" and "exceptional" students will be provided through the college's matriculation evaluation plans. It is hoped that the *Student Profiles* will assist the counseling faculty in making placement recommendations to students with borderline assessment scores and other special circumstances, consequently improving the probability of the students' success.

**Long-term Use of Placement Recommendations**

The Chancellor's Office is expected to review and approve assessment instruments for use in the community colleges. The college must, however, undertake the refinement and validation of its local ESL placement procedure, adopt another standardized instrument, or most likely, undertake the development of a more comprehensive local procedure.

The observed weakness of the placement procedure for students postponing English language instruction will also be further studied. Within the College Access Program of the college's Title III grant, provision has been made for experimenting with new assessment instruments and computer adaptive testing. It is conceivable that a first effort could be undertaken to use students who have completed college units, but who have not enrolled in an English course, to pilot adaptive testing for English placement. This would allow the "refreshing" of a student's placement recommendation, taking into account the impact of their college experience in a convenient manner. Transfer of our current assessment instruments into the computerized format will also make the process more rapid and efficient.

The issue of differential impact will also be addressed within the longitudinal studies undertaken. At this time the CGPGPA1 placement recommendation does not have negative impact on student placements due to ethnicity or gender as compared with the previous campus procedure, given general expectations about student preparation. However, the outcome of treatment is also a fundamental criterion for equity. All follow-up studies will fulfill Title 5 Assessment Regulations by closely examining the impact of assessment, placement, and instruction on the success of the different student groups which populate the college.

It is anticipated that at least four semesters of enrollment records will be reviewed for students in the spring 1989 and fall 1989 data bases for final

recommendations to be made. Reports and refinements are anticipated through the fall of 1992 at which time both placement recommendations and standards should be stable. This timeline allows for the possibility of changing the language assessment instruments or augmenting the choices for placement. Likewise a similar procedure will be utilized to evaluate the assessment, placement, and treatment related to the ESL curriculum following extensive dialog among the faculty as to their perceptions of the problems and issues.

## CONCLUSION

The effort to raise standards while insuring student equity is not a simple matter nor a short-term process within the institution. The cooperation and coordination of instructional and counseling faculty, the Assessment Committee, the Learning, Tutorial, and Assessment Center, Data Processing, and the Planning and Research unit within a generally supportive institutional environment are required to achieve student success, student equity, and rigorous instructional standards.

As the work proceeds on the array of assessments used, and on the refinement of placement and course standards, additional volumes tracing the work will be issued.

## FOOTNOTES

1 Kangas, Jon Alan, A Listing of Entry Level Assessment Instruments used in California Community Colleges for Fall 1986. San Jose: Learning, Assessment, Retention Consortium of the California Community Colleges, November 1986.

2 Harold Cochrane, Dean Emeritus of counseling and assessment.

3 Comparative Guidance and Placement Program, College Entrance Examination Board Follow-up Study for Glendale Community College, 1985, page 25.

4 McMillan, James and Sally Schumacher, Research in Education. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1984, page 411.

5 Ibid, page 407.

6 Ibid, page 410.

7 CEEB Follow-up, Glendale Community College, 1985, page 10.

8 Veloris Lang, Language Arts Division Chair

## APPENDIX A: EQUATIONS

FINAL EQUATION WITH OPEN REGRESSION: English 101 Grade

Dependent Variable: NEW101

Constant: .192490

+ .254568 HSGPA + .175700 Age - .317791 Male - .135438 Impor/self

+ .032085 CGPSentence

Standard error = .99125 Significance F = .0000

FINAL EQUATION WITH CGPGPA1 REGRESSION: English 101 Grade

Dependent Variable: NEW101

Constant: -.256627

+ .169805 CGPGPA1 + .152544 Age - .131614 Import/self - .352682 Male

Standard Error = 1.01248 Significance F = .0000

FINAL EQUATION WITH CGPGPA1 REGRESSION: English 101 Grade of A or B

Dependent Variable: HIGH2

Constant: -.693441

+ .076920 CGPGPA1 + .056299 Age - .205690 Male

Standard Error = .45257 Significance F = .0000



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